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THE STUDY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS.

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The study of words is by no means the whole of interpretation. No language, unless it be that of a mathematical formula or a logical definition, conveys in the words expressed all the thought which it represents in the mind of the speaker or even all that it is intended to create and actually does create in the mind of the intelligent hearer. The interpreter who confines himself to mere word-study must often miss the richest and best of his author's thought. The study of words is only the beginning of interpretation. It is to the interpreter what the study of materials is to the architect, only with this difference that the architect studies materials with reference to a building that is yet unbuilt, while the interpreter studies words in a structure already completed. But just because the study of words is elementary it is important. To neglect it is either to lose oneself amid the possible paths of thought, or to surrender oneself to the uncertain leading of the exegetical imagination, a servant as indispensable to the interpreter as the scout to the general, but when unguided by careful study of words, as unsafe to follow as a scout making his first reconnaissance in an unmapped country.

The scope of this paper is narrow. It is intended not for the morphologist but for the interpreter. It concerns itself not with the form and sound of words but with their meanings. It limits itself moreover to one of the two questions which in his study of a word the interpreter must always distinguish in thought and often separate in process. These two questions are: 1. What are the possible meanings of this word, what are the various ideas which in the writers of this time it was used to express? and 2. What is its actual meaning in the passage in hand? This paper is to treat only of the methods of answering the former of these questions. Again, it addresses itself not to the experienced interpreter

but to the beginner in the art of interpretation. It may indeed be thought that for the beginner the whole discussion is superfluous. In view of the great progress that has already been made in New Testament lexicography, the results of which are made available in the admirable lexicons of Thayer and Cremer, not to mention the Biblical Encyclopedias, in their sphere scarcely less valuable, it may well seem that for all except perhaps a few specialists the study of New Testament words reduces itself to a diligent use of the lexicons. Certainly the student who should ignore the results already accomplished and endeavor to proceed in entire independence of them would make a serious mistake. But on the other hand it would be a hardly less serious mistake to suppose that even for the beginner in New Testament interpretation independent investigation has been or can be rendered entirely needless. In the first place, no earnest student can consent always and on all points to accept on authority even of the ablest lexicographers the opinions which he is to hold on matters as vital as those with which New Testament lexicography has to deal. Again, even where he has no reason to doubt the correctness of the opinions presented in the lexicon, he will crave that clearness of view that is scarcely obtainable except by personal and independent investigation. And still again, some experience in that kind of investigation by which the lexicographer obtains his results is a valuable aid to the student in enabling him both to appreciate and to understand those results as set forth in the lexicon. To have investigated even one word thoroughly gives new significance to every article in the lexicon.

Granting then the importance of this part of the exegetical process, we have to point out the principles according to which the work must proceed.

1. *The meaning of words must be ascertained inductively.*—The problem before us in any given case is to determine in what sense or senses it was possible for an author of a certain period and country to use a certain word. This is not a problem of mathematics to be solved by appeal to axiomatic principles, but a question of history to be answered, like any other such question, by testimony. But neither is that which

we seek a single isolated fact to be determined by a single decisive testimony; nor a matter of caprice incapable of any exact and certain determination. It belongs to that great class of general historical facts to be established by a concurrence of probable testimonies. Usage is the law of language and to the facts of usage is our only appeal. A dictionary may make its categorical assertion, but this is either the result of an induction based on the facts of usage or it is worthless.

Obvious as is the principle that the meaning of words must be determined inductively, there is an equally obvious difficulty in the way of its perfect application. The interpreter seeks to know the possible meanings of a word that he may determine the meaning in a particular passage. But if the meaning is unknown in the passage which he seeks to interpret, it is as likely to be unknown in all the passages which form the basis of the induction; and from uncertainties only uncertainty can issue. The difficulty is a real one, but it is less in practice than in theory. We examine each of the passages employed in the induction and availing ourselves of any suggestion offered by the derivation of the word, from the study of the context determine provisionally the meaning of the word. The result in each case is not a final conclusion but a more or less probable inference. To determine at once and finally the meaning of a word from the context of a single passage is an obvious though a common error. But to deduce from the context a probability respecting the meaning of a word and on a multitude of such probabilities to base a conclusion is the only method by which correct and assured results can be reached. From each passage we may gain some light upon the meaning, either some element of its meaning or some probability respecting its full meaning, and so from all the available passages obtain a full and definite conception of that for which the word stood. This process is of course substantially the same as that by which conclusions are reached in any department of historical or scientific investigation. It is indeed the same process by which from childhood up we have learned the meaning of by far the larger part of the words that we now know. The child hears

a word once. The connection in which it is used or some other circumstance associated with its use suggests in part its meaning. Another and another instance of its use follows, each new occurrence confirming the old impression, or tending to its completion, until one day the parent discovers that the child is able to use the word with a degree of accuracy and appropriateness which no amount of formal instruction about the meaning of the word could have made possible. This method, therefore, is at the same time the natural and the scientific method.

2. *The field of induction may properly include not only the writings of the single author whom we are studying but those of his contemporaries.*—No author can be wholly independent of contemporary usage. He must perforce conform to that usage or fail to be understood. And since every writer is subject to the same necessity, the common usage of any period is reflected in the literature of that period, and the usage of each author is fixed in general by that common usage. On the one hand any author may make use of a word in any sense justified by common usage, and hence we must reckon every such sense among his possible meanings of the word in question; and on the other hand while each author may have his own peculiarities of diction, which the interpreter must observe and recognize, these peculiarities must take their start from common usage and the author must in some way make it clear in just what respect he intends to create a new usage.

3. *All broad and thorough study of words must be historical as well as inductive.*—In other words it must include not only an induction based on contemporary literature, but a study of the word under investigation in the earlier literature in which it occurs. This is especially true of words belonging to a time remote from that of the investigator or to a literature in any sense foreign to him. To ascertain the meaning of the words occurring in the novel published yesterday in Boston or New York it may be sufficient to base an induction upon the novels of the present decade; indeed it is quite possible that a familiarity with the ordinary colloquial English of the day, such as is obtained without any distinct

effort, will be quite sufficient for the task supposed. But it is manifest that a very different problem is before us when we desire to know the meanings of words in the orations of Cicero or the dramas of Æschylus, or the letters of the Apostle Paul. But even when we recognize this difference it is perhaps not at once obvious why it is desirable to make our study of words historical as well as inductive. Consider then one or two reasons for this course.

In the first place, it broadens the field of induction. It is true that evidence derived from other than contemporary literature has only an indirect value, since meanings possible in one period may be impossible in another. Yet despite this disadvantage a broadening of the field of induction is in many cases greatly to be desired. Indirect evidence is better than none. In the case of some New Testament words, for example, the instances of their occurrence in contemporary literature are all too few to permit an induction worthy of the name. In such cases an extension of the field of the induction is imperatively required, if we would do more than to guess at the meaning of our word. How often has the student occasion to be grateful for the preservation of the Greek version of the Old Testament with its wealth of material for the study of New Testament words, and how often is he compelled devoutly to wish that Providence had left him a few more instances of a rare word or phrase.

But a second and more important reason is that it gives to the investigation what, for lack of a better word, we may call perspective. Words are much like men: fully to understand them we must know their ancestors as well as themselves; and this is even more true of words than it is of men. Facts which when viewed as isolated facts seem to yield little valuable result, become luminous with information, when looked at in line with certain other related facts. An impression that a word had at least sometimes a certain meaning—this impression based upon the examination of contemporary literature may become a conviction when viewed in the light of the earlier history of the word. Even when the meaning has evidently not remained the same throughout the history of the word, this very change of meaning serves to bring into

clearer relief the meaning in the period under consideration.

As compared with the study of the history of a word down to the period to which the literature under examination belongs, its subsequent history must be regarded of secondary value. Evidence derived from this source will be chiefly confirmatory. Yet when contemporary evidence is scanty, valuable assistance may be gained from the later history of the word. There are words the only known instances of which outside the New Testament are found in writings of a later date than those of the New Testament, and many of these words occur but once or twice in the New Testament. One who has a curiosity to see the list of such words may consult the first list in the Appendix to Thayer's *Lexicon*, noting the words marked with an asterisk. Closely allied to evidence of this sort is that which is derived from translations of the book which it is sought to interpret. That these should have any special value they must come from an age when the language which we are studying was still a living language. Modern versions have of course somewhat the same value as modern dictionaries. They are not properly evidence. In the study of Old Testament words the evidence derived from ancient versions is, because of the smaller volume of other evidence, relatively of much more value than in the study of the Greek of the New Testament. In the latter case we are fortunate in possessing so large a body of direct evidence that the indirect evidence of the versions is of distinctively subordinate value. The thorough student cannot however afford altogether to neglect it.

4. *The field of induction is not necessarily confined to the instances of the word itself, but may properly include other words of the same root.*—That which justifies this enlargement of the field is the observed fact that words of the same root tend to develop corresponding meanings. Yet the value of this evidence will vary greatly in different cases. Two words springing from the same root may diverge until they bear widely different, even almost opposite meanings.* On

* Compare for example the Greek word *stasimos*, *steady*, and *stasis*, *sedition*, *discord*; *nomos*, *law*, and *nomos*, different only in accent, *pasturage*; *anathēma* and *anathēma*, both of which meant properly a *thing set up*, then a *votive offering*, but which so diverged in usage that while in Euripides and

the other hand affinity of usage among kindred words may be so close as to make the evidence derived from a cognate word of almost equal value with that derived from the word itself. Cases of this sort are so frequent and familiar that examples are needless.

5. *As far as practicable the study of words should include the differentiation of synonyms.*—For giving sharpness and clearness to our conception of the content of a term there is perhaps no more valuable process than the comparison and differentiation of synonyms. Its value has long been recognized not only as a means of acquiring ability to use words with discrimination, but also as an adjunct of the interpretation of words. Much has already been done in the study of New Testament synonyms, but much remains to be done. Indeed in one sense much will always remain to be done; for here, as in so many other lines of study, he only gains the largest benefit who himself does the work. It need hardly be said that the study of synonyms must be based upon the original text, not upon a translation.

Closely related to the study of synonyms is the study of antithetical and correlative terms. To know what *righteousness* is, is no small help to the understanding of what *sin* is. To understand what the word *servant* signifies throws no little light upon the meaning of the word *lord*. Aid from these sources is not always available, but when it is available it is too valuable to be neglected.

From the principle that the study of words must be historical it follows that the student must have at least a general knowledge of the history of the language whose words he is to study. Consider then briefly how the Greek of the New Testament arose. In one respect and partially the Greek of the New Testament is like the English of to-day. It is, so to speak, of mixed blood. The vocabulary of Modern English is, roughly speaking, a mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French. The Greek of the New Testament is, as

Plato *anathēma* means an *ornament*, in the Septuagint and New Testament *anathēma* means an *accursed thing*. Such diversity is sometimes found in the various meanings of the same word. For example *stasis* means not only *discord* but *stationariness*.

has so often been said, Hebrew thought in Greek dress. In its words it is almost purely Greek, but in its underlying conceptions, modes of thought, and even in its methods of expression, it is very largely Hebrew. How did this come about? While in Greece poets, philosophers, dramatists, and historians were creating what we now know as the Greek language, a language which by common consent is given almost the highest place among the languages of the world for flexibility and accuracy of expression, in Palestine and Babylonia a long line of Hebrew prophets was bringing into human thought the purest and most elevated religious ideas which so far as records inform us were known to any people of pre-Christian times. In the fourth century B. C. both these processes had reached their climax. At about the time of Alexander's Conquest and partly in consequence of it, the Greek language became much more widely extended than it had previously been, suffering at the same time some modification. It is usual to speak of the Greek of this period, dating from about the time of Aristotle, as the Common Dialect or Hellenic Greek. Alexandria in particular became a new centre of Greek culture. But to Alexandria came also Jews, bringing their religion. Here accordingly the Greek language and the Hebrew religion come into contact. The Old Testament Scriptures are translated into Greek. That the translation is imperfect does not seriously affect the result with which we are now concerned. Into the Greek word is poured the content of the Hebrew word. The Jewish reader to whom both languages are known henceforth reads the Greek word with a coloring derived from the Hebrew word or even imports into the Greek word the idea of the Hebrew word unchanged. Even the reader to whom the Hebrew is unknown perceives from the context and from the whole atmosphere of the book that the Greek word has acquired a somewhat new sense. Thus there arises a new type, almost a new dialect, of Greek, usually known as Hellenistic Greek, of which the Septuagint version of the Old Testament is partly cause and partly product. In this dialect other works are written preserving to us records of the dialect at a little later stage of its development. Such are the Apocryphal

books of the Old Testament, some of which are translations of Hebrew works, others of which are works written originally in Greek. Whatever may be thought of the value of these books for spiritual instruction, they are of almost priceless value to the student of New Testament words. In this Hellenistic dialect or Jewish Greek the New Testament itself was written, only with this very important modification, that the doctrines which Jesus and the Apostles taught introduced an influence tending to the modification of the meaning of words not less important than that which had previously been exerted by the Old Testament.

But while we recognize the large Semitic element which through the Septuagint and otherwise entered into Hellenistic Greek, it must not be forgotten that Hellenic Greek, which existed side by side with it, must continually have exerted its influence also. In particular should it be observed that some of the New Testament writers, especially Luke and Paul, came into frequent contact with people speaking Hellenic Greek, and wrote to be read by those whose Greek was of the Hellenic type. This fact could not fail to affect the language which they used.

It will thus appear that if we will investigate the ancestry of a New Testament word we must in many cases trace out two lines, the Hebrew and the Greek, until we find them meeting in the Hellenistic Greek which arose, probably chiefly at Alexandria, about three centuries before the Christian era; and must then pursue the united stream down to the time of the writing of the New Testament books themselves, not forgetting that the stream of Hellenic Greek flowed on parallel to that of Hellenistic Greek and continually contributed to make the latter what it was. Even literature of a somewhat later period will not be wholly excluded from the investigation, but will acquire primary importance only in cases of paucity of other evidence. The fullness with which any portion of the history requires investigation will depend on the importance of the word and the closeness of the relation between such period and the period to which the usage under investigation belongs.

The sources of evidence from which the meaning of a New

Testament word may be determined may then be tabulated as follows:—

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{ | a. | Etymology of the Greek word, including study of its cognates in other languages. |
| | b. | Usage of the word in classical writers. |
| | c. | Usage in Hellenic writers down to New Testament times. |
| | d. | Etymology of the Hebrew word of which the Greek word in question is the usual translation in the Septuagint. |
| | e. | Usage of this Hebrew word in the Old Testament. |
| | f. | Usage of the Greek word in the Septuagint, canonical books. |
| | g. | Usage in the Old Testament Apocrypha and other Jewish writings down to New Testament times. |
| | h. | Usage in the New Testament. |
| | i. | Usage subsequent to New Testament times, Hellenic (Pagan), Jewish, Christian. |
| | j. | Usage of the words employed to translate it in the ancient versions of the New Testament. |
| k. | Usage of the cognate words. | |
| l. | Usage of synonymous, correlative, and antithetical terms. | |

Respecting the relation of the various sources of evidence, notice that a-b-c constitutes one line of development and d-e another parallel line; a stream from a-b-c unites with d-e to form f. Only a portion, however, of the line represented by c precedes the union with d-e. When therefore we are forming our background of Hellenic usage for the investigation of Septuagint usage, only such Hellenic writers must be used as are early enough to be fairly supposed to indicate what Hellenic usage was when the Septuagint version arose. The latter part of c may be conceived of as uniting with the line f-g to form h. If classical literature be taken to include the writings of Aristotle with all that preceded him, the Hellenic literature which precedes the Septuagint is of small compass. By far the larger part of Hellenic literature is between the Septuagint and the New Testament or subsequent to the New Testament. The expression New Testament times is somewhat indefinite. It seems right, however, in this investigation to extend it so as to take in the contemporaries of the New Testament writers,

even such of them as wrote a little later than most of the New Testament writers. Literature down to about 100 A. D. may properly be used to show what the usage of New Testament times was. Respecting *k* and *l* it should be observed that they do not represent a continuation of the line *f-g-h-i*, but sources of evidence parallel to all the preceding.

The method of studying New Testament words here recommended is then briefly this: The inductive study of the history of the usage both of the Greek word and, when this is available, of its recognized Hebrew equivalent; this investigation to be carried on stage by stage according to what we have reason to believe was the actual development of the New Testament vocabulary; using also whatever aid may be gained from the study of other words related either in origin or meaning. Evidence from any period is to be used to prove what the usage of that period was, and the results of such study of each period to enable us to approach more intelligently the succeeding period, till we reach the New Testament period. Evidence from a period later than this is to be employed to throw light back upon this, for us, chief period. At the completion of each stage of the process the results reached should be carefully stated in writing. This tends to secure clear and definite statement and preserves whatever has been accomplished. At the close of the whole investigation the final result should be summed up in a statement of the New Testament meaning of the word or an analysis of New Testament meanings.

Of course there are many words which from lack of materials it is impossible to investigate as fully as the above outline suggests. Some words, for example, have no classical history; others have no representative in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. Each word must be investigated according to its own history. Nor is a partial investigation altogether to be despised. An examination of the full list of New Testament instances will often prove a valuable addition to the study of the lexicon. But the student who forms the habit of making such an examination will be almost certain to desire to extend it to include one or more of the other steps indicated in the above process.

Respecting the tools necessary for the prosecution of such a study as we have been considering, a few suggestions may be offered to beginners. In the study of Greek Etymology much aid may be gained from Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon. In some cases even more valuable help may be got from Thayer's Lexicon of the New Testament or Cremer's Biblico-Theological Lexicon. For fuller information reference may be had to Curtius, *Grundzüge des Griechischen Etymologie*; Fick, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Indogermanischen Sprachen*; Vanicek, *Griechisch-Lateinisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, The work of Curtius is translated into English by Wilkins and England. The statements in the latest edition of Liddell and Scott's Lexicon are based on those of Curtius. The usage of classical and Hellenic writers may also be learned from Liddell and Scott's Lexicon. When fuller information is desired recourse may be had to the larger Lexicon of Stephanus. For still fuller information one may consult the lexicons and concordances of single authors and through them the works of the authors themselves. Among such special lexicons and concordances may be mentioned, Dunbar's Concordance to the Odyssey and Hymns of Homer; Prendergast's Concordance to the Iliad of Homer; Ellendt's Lexicon Sophocleum; Dunbar's Concordance to Aristophanes; von Essen's Lexicon Thucydideum; Ast's Lexicon Platonicum. But these are only samples. A full list of special lexicons, concordances and indexed editions of Greek authors would of itself make a long article if not indeed a small volume. And still one misses from the list some things one would gladly see. How valuable, for example, to the New Testament student would be good concordances of Plutarch, of Philo, and of Josephus. The etymology of Hebrew words must be learned from the Hebrew lexicon. The usage of Hebrew words may be learned from the same source, or the student may reach his own independent conclusions from the passages searched out with the aid of a concordance, Fuerst's or the Englishman's. Young's Analytical Concordance may also be made to answer by the aid of the Index, published separately. For Septuagint usage it will usually be best for the student to appeal directly

to the passages themselves. They may be found by means of the Concordance of Tromm, or by the Handy Concordance of the Septuagint. It is a matter for congratulation that the Concordance of the Septuagint, the publication of which was delayed by the death of its lamented editor Dr. Edwin Hatch, is soon to appear. For those who can obtain it, it will doubtless supersede everything else. Schleusner's Thesaurus . . . sive Lexicon in LXX . . . may also be consulted but can hardly take the place of a personal examination of the passages. For a complete concordance of the Apocrypha we must wait until the work which Dr. Hatch had planned appears. Meantime more or less full lists of passages may be made up by consulting the full edition of Cruden's Concordance, Tromm, and the Clavis Librorum Veteris Testamenti Apocryphorum of Wahl. For the study of New Testament usage one may use any concordance of the Greek Testament, Bruder's, the Englishman's or Hudson's. Young's and the Index may also be used. In most cases a list may even be made out from the lexicon, either Robinson's or Thayer's. To use the versions to any advantage the student must of course be familiar with the language of the version. In the study of synonyms the work of Trench on that subject may be profitably consulted, as also the briefer discussions of Thayer and Cremer. But the use of these books ought not to induce the student to neglect independent comparison of the words themselves as they occur in the literature accessible to him. Whatever tools are used, nothing can take the place of careful examination of each passage and the formation of independent opinions based directly upon the ultimate evidence.

In a subsequent number of *THE STUDENT* the writer hopes to present the outline of a study to be conducted along the lines laid down in this article.